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Patentanwälte

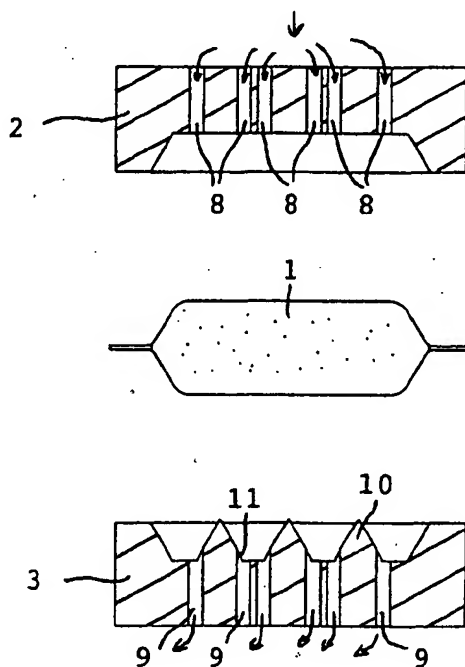
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(54) **Coffee extraction system**

(57) Coffee extract is extracted from a water permeable container (1) or a water impermeable container containing a dose of ground coffee by inserting this container in an extraction chamber (5) where the container

is pierced by extraction elements (10). Extraction flow from the chamber (5) is prevented by blocking means (16) until a predetermined pressure of the water is reached. In this way extract quality from a water permeable container is enhanced.

**FIG. 1b****EP 1 247 480 A1**

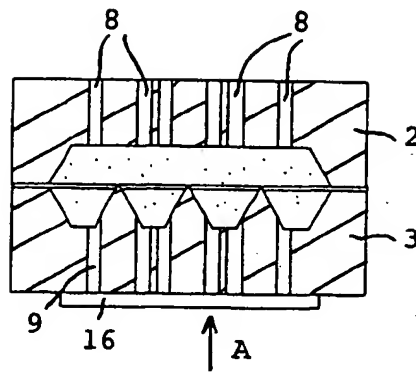


FIG. 1c

Description

[0001] The invention relates to a coffee machine according to the preamble of claim 1 or claim 2 or and claim 8. The invention further relates to a coffee extraction system according to claims 13 and/or 15 and to coffee extraction methods according to claims 17 and/or 18.

[0002] It is known by example from EP-B-0 717 603 to enclose a dose of ground coffee in a water permeable container and to extract coffee therefrom in an extraction chamber by pressing hot water through the container. The water permeable container is usually made of coffee filter paper and therefore allows water to enter the container through the paper on one side and provides the coffee filtering means by itself on the other side. On the other hand different systems are known where ground coffee is enclosed in a closed, completely water impermeable container which has to be pierced on one side by water injection means and which bursts open on the other side by the pressure of the water in the container which acts on a container membrane. This bursting may be promoted by a filter plate having cone shaped elements resulting in local stress areas on the membrane stressed and bursted by the water pressure; such a system is for example known from EP-B-0 604 615.

[0003] The first object of the present invention is to improve on the coffee extract quality of the first kind of systems with water permeable containers.

[0004] This object is met by a first aspect of the invention according to the features of claim 1.

[0005] Surprisingly, it has been found that a piercing of the water permeable container in the extraction chamber - which seems to be in contradiction to this system since the container is water permeable per se - and the providing of extraction channels gives a better defined extraction at higher pressures which results in a better perceived coffee extract quality. The claimed coffee machine is provided with an extraction chamber and the extraction means, which pierce the container in this chamber.

[0006] Another object of the invention is to improve on the coffee extract quality of the second kind of systems with water impermeable containers.

[0007] This object is met by a coffee machine with the features of claim 2. It has been found, that the piercing of the water impermeable containers upon closing of the chamber to provide extraction channels, which gives a defined opening of the container from the beginning instead of the bursting open due to inner pressure thereof, can improve extraction quality.

[0008] Preferably the extraction elements are provided on the surface on the chamber wall, so that upon closing of the chamber to enclose the container is automatically pierced and the channels are provided. In an alternative embodiment, the extraction elements can be introduced into the chamber separately and are thus designed to be introduced movably through the chamber

wall or walls.

[0009] According to another aspect of the invention according to claim 8, which may be provided alone or in combination with the above first aspect, the water and coffee extract is prevented from leaving the extraction chamber until a predetermined pressure has been reached in this chamber. This avoids a mere percolating of the water through the container and puts the coffee under the sought for water pressure for a certain, well-defined time, which has heretofore not been the case.

[0010] Preferably this aspect is combined with the above first aspect of piercing the container and providing extraction channels.

[0011] The objects are further met by a coffee extraction system including a coffee machine and the containers which embodies the first aspect of the invention by the features of claim 13 and the second aspect by the features of claim 15. Both aspects can be preferably combined in the system as well.

[0012] The object are further met by the extraction methods of claim 17 for the first aspect and claim 18 for the second aspect, which may preferably be combined. The second aspect according to claim 18 may be of benefit as well for ground coffee placed in the extraction chamber without a container at all.

[0013] In the following preferred embodiments are described as examples with reference to the drawings wherein

Figures 1a to 1d show a general schematic overview on the extraction steps;

Figure 2 shows a sectional view of a part of the extraction chamber and the container;

Figure 3 shows a general overview on the hydraulic system of a coffee machine according to the invention;

Figure 4 shows a perspective view of an inner surface of the extraction chamber; and

Figure 5 shows more detailed a sectional view through the one extraction chamber part and the driving pistons for closing the chamber and blocking fluid flow therethrough; and

Figure 6 shows a sectional view similar to Fig. 1b with water injection means for piercing the container.

[0014] Figures 1a to 1d show in a very general way the extraction of coffee according to the two aspects of the invention. Figure 1a shows a container 1 which may be a water permeable container according to EP-B-0 717 603. This has to be understood as an example only, all kinds and shapes of water permeable containers are possible, for example a cylindrical shape with permeable upper and lower faces or a cubic shape. The water permeable parts of the container are usually made of filter paper or the like and the container contains a dose of ground coffee, for example in an amount sufficient for preparing one cup of coffee. It is as well preferred to use water impermeable containers, which are known and which are pierced as well as explained herein.

[0015] For producing the coffee extract from the

ground coffee contained in the container 1, it is known, and is the case in the present invention as well, to insert this container into an extraction chamber 5, which can be done manually or by automatic feeding means depending on the actual type of coffee machine. For insertion of the container 5 the extraction chamber is in an open state as shown in Figure 1b. It is known to then close the extraction chamber which is adapted in its shape, to the type of container used, and specifically to its shape so that the container is enclosed by the extraction chamber. Enclosed in the context of the present invention means that the container is in a closed chamber more or less held tightly therein. It is possible that flanges or a flange 4 of the container are thereby pinched between two parts 2, 3 forming together the extraction body with the extraction chamber 5. The coffee extract is then produced by pressing hot water through inlet openings 8 of the part 2 which water flows through the filter paper of the container 1 the ground coffee 7 and out of the chamber 5 through outlet openings 9 in the other part 3 which is provided with a multitude of openings 9 as in a filter plate, although the filtering is mainly done by the filter paper of the container resting against the surface 14 of the part 3 forming the inner extraction chamber wall. The coffee extract flowing out of outlets 9 is collected in a conduit, which finally ends above the cup. Water flows in this known way as long as the pump of the coffee machine is working and the pressure generated in the container depends mainly from the compactness of the coffee powder in the container and the number and diameter of the openings 9. Water impermeable containers will have to be pierced by water injecting means to inject water therein, as will be explained later.

[0016] According to one aspect of the invention and still with reference to Figs. 1a to 1d, there are provided elements 10 which enter into the container being in the extraction chamber and which provide extraction channels 11 reaching into the container (these channels are better visible in Figs. 2 and 4). Accordingly, the container is pierced by the elements 10, which makes it preferable to provide them with a conical or pyramidal shape or other shape allowing a piercing of the container wall without tearing it too much, so that the elements 10 are inserted in the container 1 without destroying the filter paper (in case of the permeable container) or the water impermeable wall of the container except for the piercing area.

[0017] The elements 10 are shown in the examples as being solid with the part 3 and thus with the wall of the extraction chamber 5. This is a preferred embodiment which lead automatically to the piercing of the container as the parts 2, 3 move together to close the chamber 5. It is, however, possible as well to have separate elements 10 which are moved into the chamber 5 after the chamber has been closed, for example needle-like shaped or conical elements 10 that are inserted into the chamber 5 and thus into the container through openings in part 3 which may or may not be the outlet openings

9 at the same time. These outlet openings 9 may in this case be provided within the elements 10 as well. The piercing elements move in any case into the space of the chamber provided for the container and thus actively pierce this container before water is fed therein.

[0018] The water is pressed through the openings 8 of part 2 and enters the container 1 through its permeable paper wall. The coffee extract on the other hand leaves the container 1 mainly by channels 11 being in connection with outlet openings 9. Figure 2 shows an enlarged part sectional view of part 3 and an element 10 with channel 11. This channel 11 may open directly in an outlet opening 9 or there may be provided as shown in Figures 2 and 4 channel sections 13 that are grooves in the surface 14 of the chamber wall or part 3, respectively. The outlet openings 9 may preferably be shaped as a nozzle as shown in Figure 2 or more generally as having a smaller diameter section along their length or may be straight openings.

[0019] By providing defined channels 11 and preferably 13, a more even and predictable flow of water is resulting and the pressure generated in the chamber 5 and container 1, respectively, is greater and better defined as in the prior art coffee machines, extraction systems and methods, which results in a better and from dose to dose more uniform coffee extract quality.

[0020] The nozzle shaped outlet openings 9 enhance this effect by making it possible to make the smallest opening diameters smaller than straight openings without excessive danger of clogging of the openings.

[0021] Figure 4, which just shows the extraction surface 14 of the part 3 without the flange thereof for forming a closed chamber 5, shows again elements 10 with channels 11 and preferred grooves 13. Of course, the number of elements 10 and the number of channels 11 and grooves 14 and their shapes are only to be understood as an example.

[0022] With reference to Figure 1c which shows the closed extraction state of chamber 5, which would allow extraction as explained above, another aspect of the present invention is explained. As can be seen in Figure 1c, the outlet openings 9 are blocked by a blocking element 16 which prevents flow of the water through the extraction chamber 5 and container 1. Since the pump is working and water can enter the chamber 5 through openings 8, the pressure in the chamber is raising depending on the power of the pump. A force A is acting on the blocking element 16, which counteracts the force of the coffee extract wanting to exit through outlet openings 9. As soon as the pressure build up by the pump has reached a predetermined level, the blocking means is removed, for example by reversing force A, and the outlet openings are opened so that coffee extract can flow out of the chamber and into the cup as explained above, as shown in Figure 1d.

[0023] This blocking of the extraction chamber is preferably done at its outlet openings as shown, but it would as well be possible to arrange blocking means in flow

direction nearer to the final outlet above the cup.

[0024] The blocking of the extraction chamber enhances extraction pressure therein, which improves the perceived coffee extract quality. This aspect of the invention as coffee machine, coffee extraction system and extraction method can be used independently of the above aspect of the providing of extraction channels reaching into the container, so that the face 14 of the part 3 maybe a flat face with the outlet openings 9 but without elements 10 and channels 11. The grooves 13 and the nozzle shape of the openings may be still provided, however. A positive effect of enhancing extract quality is reached by the pressure enhancement in the water permeable container nevertheless. But it is preferred to combine both aspects as shown in Figs. 1c and 1d.

[0025] The controlled enhancing of the pressure by the blocking means can even give a better result if the ground coffee is inserted into the chamber 5 without container 1 but as powder, for example in known manner by a spoon, which is then compacted. The controlled pressure by the pump and the blocking means gives more uniform extract quality in this type of use as well.

[0026] With reference to Figures 3 and 5 the coffee machine and coffee extracting system and method are now explained more in detail. Figure 3 shows schematically the hydraulic circuit of a coffee machine according to an embodiment of the invention. The chamber 5 is shown in open state and in this schematic view without the elements 10 and the openings for water and extract. Parts 2 and 3 are shown and part 2 is fixed whereas part 3 is movable along directions B and C to open and close the chamber 5. A pump 20 sucks water from a tank 21 by conduit 22. The pump feeds water through conduit 23 to an electric heating element from which the water is fed via conduit 25 to the openings in wall 2 (not shown) into chamber 5 when it is in closed state. The pump feeds water on the other hand via line 25 and an electrically controlled valve 26 into a chamber 27. Valve 26 is at this time operated to let water pass by line 25 but no water passes through line 28, which can lead water back to the tank 21. When water under pressure enters chamber 27, the extraction unit 30, which bears at its one end the part 3 of the chamber 5 is moved in direction C to close the chamber 5 into which a container 1 (not shown) has been inserted beforehand. Accordingly, this container is enclosed in the chamber 5. The closing of the chamber 5 is provided by the water pressure in chamber 27 against the force of spring 31 (only schematically shown), so that this spring is compressed by the closing movement of extraction unit 30. Line 25 feeds as well the pressure sensitive switch valve 40 which at a pressure below a predetermined level directs water via line 33 to a chamber 35 while line 34 leading water back to the tank 21 remains closed. By the water pressure in chamber 35 a piston 36 with the blocking plate 37 adapted to block the outlet openings 9 (not shown) in part 3 is moved forward in direction C in ad-

dition to the movement of the whole unit 30, so that the outlet openings are blocked. This movement of piston 36 acts against spring 38 (shown only schematically).

[0027] Accordingly, when the pump starts working and the water flow is enabled as described, the chamber 5 closes and the outlet openings thereof are closed. Meanwhile water is heated in heating element 24 and is then, after the closing of chamber and openings, fed to the chamber 5 by a controllable valve.

[0028] Pressure in the lines and in chamber 5 raises. As soon as the pressure reaches a level that corresponds to the predetermined switch valve 40 pressure level, this valve 40 disconnects line 33 from line 25 and connects line 33 with line 34, so that the water in chamber 35 will flow back into tank 21 thereby allowing piston 36 with blocking surface 37 to move back by spring force of spring 38 in direction B, thereby opening outlet openings 9 (not shown) which allows the flow of coffee extract from chamber 5 (still closed) into a collecting conduit (not shown) and into the cup. When the predetermined amount of water has thus flown through chamber 5 and the container, further water flow is stopped by stopping the pump to avoid overfilling of the cup. Since the extraction is now complete, the valve 26 is controlled to connect line 25 to line 28, so that water from chamber 27 flows back into tank 21 which allows spring 31 to press back the extraction 30 unit in direction B which opens chamber 5 so that the container can be removed and disposed. The machine is then ready for a new extraction cycle as described.

[0029] The pressure sensitive valve 40 is preferably a valve employing a piston fed by water under pump pressure, which piston is displaced by the water pressure against a spring. During a first travel period the piston allows connection of lines 25 and 33 and when a certain displacement is reached (depending on the water pressure) lines 33 and 34 are connected as explained.

[0030] Figure 5 shows a more detailed sectional view through parts of Figure 3 wherein same reference numerals designate same elements. In particular lower part 3 of the extraction chamber 5 is shown with the extraction elements, which can be moved by pressure in chamber 27. As well chamber 35 for moving piston 36 with blocking surface 37 is shown. The collection means 42 lead the coffee extract towards spout 43 from where the extract is delivered to the cup.

[0031] Figure 6 shows a sectional view similar to Figure 1b for the extraction of containers with water impermeable walls. These containers are pierced as well upon closing of the extraction chamber as explained before, so that there is no bursting of the container open due to water pressure as in the prior art systems. The extraction of this pierced water impermeable container is done as explained before. For introducing the water into the container it is however necessary to pierce the upper container wall as well, since this wall is water impermeable. Accordingly, Figure 6 shows water injection

piercing elements 50 connected to channels 8, which elements 50 pierce the container upon closing of the chamber, so that water can be injected into the container. There may be one injection piercing element only or several such elements as shown.

Claims

1. A coffee machine for producing coffee extract from an at least partly water permeable container (1) containing a dose of ground coffee, the coffee machine comprising water heating means, a pump, a coffee extract outlet and an extraction chamber (5) being adapted for taking up the container in an open inserting state of the chamber and enclosing it in a closed extraction state of the chamber, the extraction chamber being connected on the one hand to the heating means and the pump so that hot water under pressure can enter the extraction chamber through openings (8) in a first wall (2) thereof, said extraction chamber being connected on the other hand to the coffee extract outlet by openings (9) in a second chamber wall (3), **characterized in that** several extraction elements are provided that reach in closed extraction state of the chamber into the chamber such that a container is pierced by the elements and extraction channels are provided reaching on the one hand into the container space of the extraction chamber and being connected on the other hand to the openings of the second wall. 10
2. A coffee machine for producing coffee extract from a water impermeable container 1 containing a dose of ground coffee, the coffee machine comprising water heating means, a pump, a coffee extract outlet and an extraction chamber (5) being adapted for taking up the container in an open inserting state of the chamber and enclosing it in a closed extraction state of the chamber, the extraction chamber being connected on the one hand to the heating means and the pump so that hot water under pressure can enter the extraction chamber by at least one water injection means adapted to pierce the container on one side thereof, said extraction chamber being connected on the other hand to the coffee extract outlet by openings (9) in a second chamber wall (3), **characterized in that** several extraction elements are provided that reach in closed extraction state of the chamber into the chamber such that a container is pierced by the elements and extraction channels are provided reaching on the one hand into the container space of the extraction chamber and being connected on the other hand to the openings of the second wall. 35
3. Coffee machine according to claim 1 or 2 wherein the extraction elements form part of the second 40

chamber wall or wherein the extraction elements are separate, movable elements.

4. Coffee machine according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the extraction elements each form two or more channels being in connection with one or more of the openings. 5
5. Coffee machine according to any of claims 1 to 4 wherein the extraction channels further comprise grooves in the second chamber wall surface adjacent the elements. 10
6. Coffee machine according to any of claims 1 to 5 wherein the openings in the second chamber wall are nozzle-shaped. 15
7. Coffee machine according to any of claims 1 to 6 wherein the extraction chamber is closed and preferably the extraction elements are introduced into the container by a first water pressure operatable piston. 20
8. A coffee machine with a closed extraction chamber, in particular according to claim 1, for producing coffee extract from an at least partly water permeable container containing a dose of ground coffee, the coffee machine comprising water heating means, a pump, a coffee extract outlet and an extraction chamber being adapted for taking up the container in an open inserting state of the chamber and enclosing it in a closed extraction state of the chamber, the extraction chamber being connected on the one hand to the heating means and the pump so that hot water under pressure can enter the extraction chamber through openings in a first wall thereof and said extraction chamber being connected on the other hand to the coffee extract outlet by openings in a second chamber wall, **characterized by** controllable blocking means for preventing coffee extract flow from the extraction chamber or the coffee extract outlet until a predetermined water pressure has been reached in the coffee machine. 25
9. A coffee machine according to claim 2 **characterized by** controllable blocking means for preventing coffee extract flow from the extraction chamber or the coffee extract outlet until a predetermined water pressure has been reached in the coffee machine. 30
10. Coffee machine according to claim 8 or 9 wherein said blocking means blocks the outlet of the openings in the second chamber wall. 45
11. Coffee machine according to any of claims 8 to 10 wherein the blocking means are controlled by a second water operatable piston. 50

12. Coffee machine according to claim 11 wherein the second piston is controlled by a pressure sensitive valve relieving water pressure from the second piston when a predetermined pump pressure has been reached. 5
13. A coffee extraction system comprising a coffee machine, in particular according to claims 1 to 12, and at least partly water permeable or water impermeable containers containing a dose of ground coffee, wherein the coffee machine is adapted to enclose a container by an extraction chamber and to pierce the container while enclosing it and to provide extraction channels reaching into the container. 10 15
14. A coffee extraction system according to claim 13 wherein the extraction chamber forms a watertight enclosure around said container except for said extraction channels and water feeding means for feeding water into said container. 20
15. A coffee extraction system, in particular according to claim 13 or 14, comprising a coffee machine, in particular according to claims 1 to 12, wherein the coffee machine is adapted to enclose a dose of ground coffee by an extraction chamber and the outlet of the coffee extract from said chamber is blockable by a controlled blocking means until a predetermined pressure has been reached in the extraction chamber. 25 30
16. A coffee extraction system according to claim 13 wherein the containers have walls made of filter paper. 35
17. A method for producing coffee extract from an at least partly water permeable container or a water impermeable container containing pre-dosed ground coffee wherein the container is pierced in an extraction chamber surrounding the container by elements reaching into the container and providing extraction channels. 40
18. A method for producing coffee extract from an at least partly water permeable container or a water impermeable container containing a pre-dosed amount of ground coffee placed in an extraction chamber, or from ground coffee placed in an extraction chamber, in particular according to claim 14, wherein the outlet of coffee extract from the chamber is blocked by a controllable blocking means until the water pressure in the extraction chamber has reached a predetermined level. 45 50 55

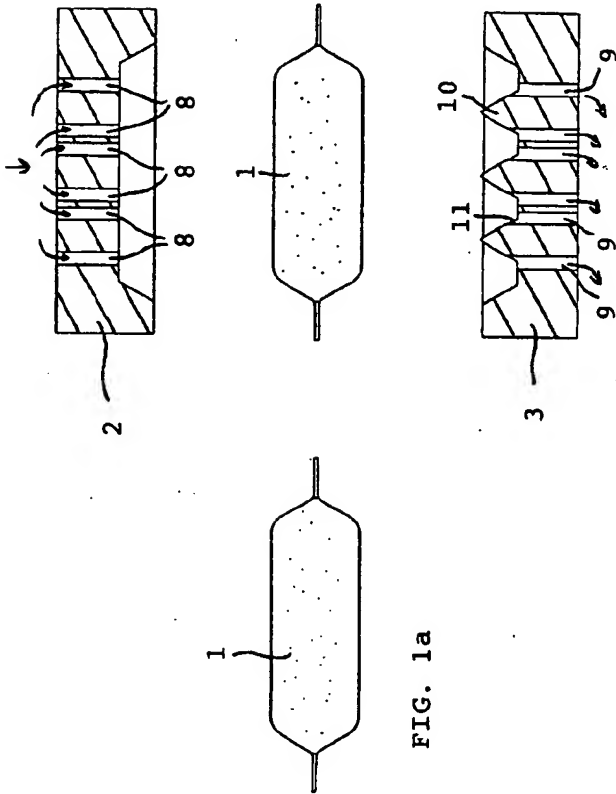


FIG. 1a

FIG. 1b

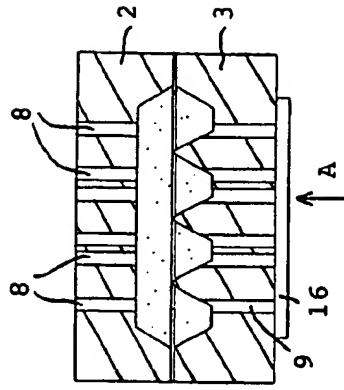


FIG. 1c

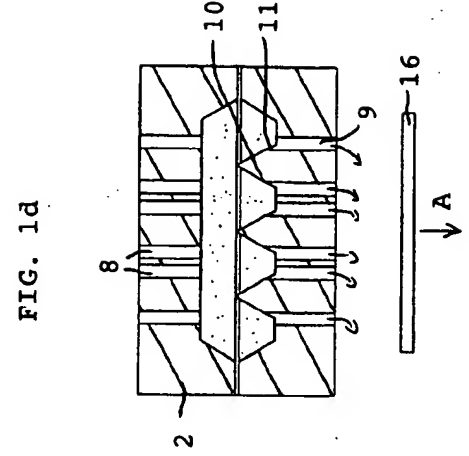


FIG. 1d

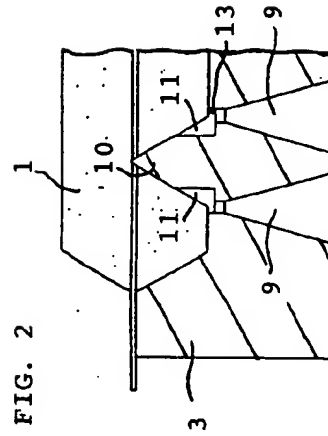
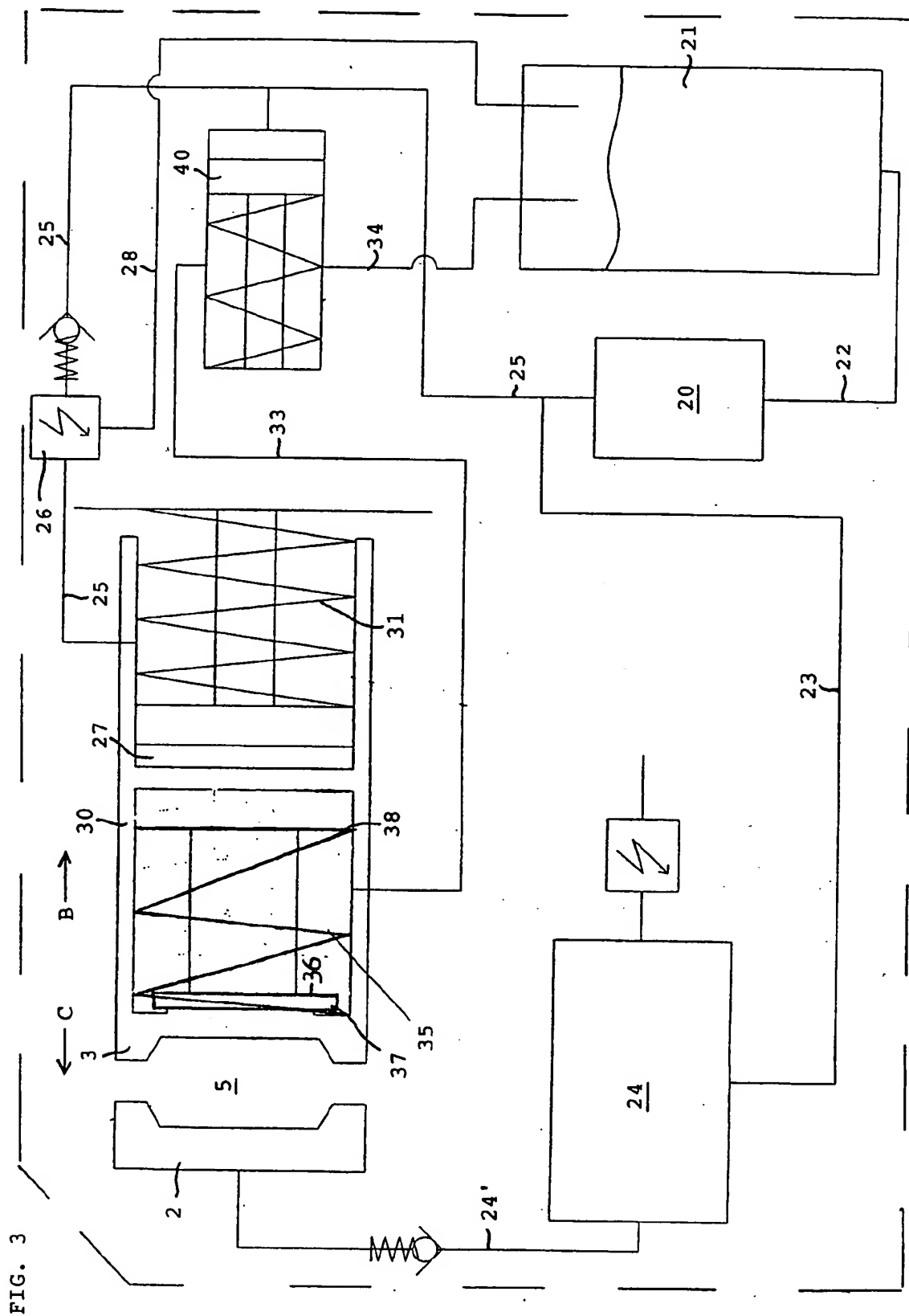


FIG. 2



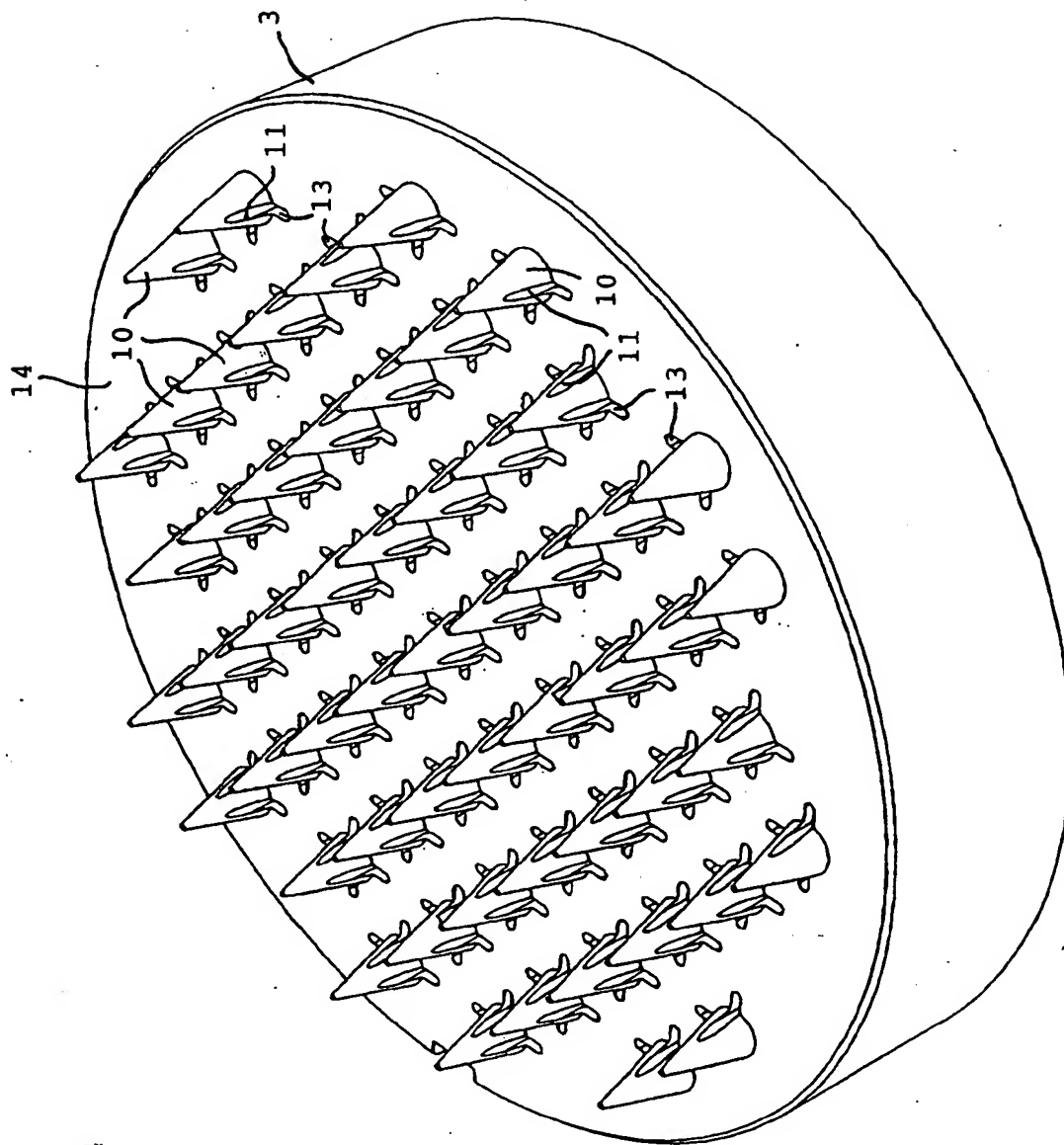


FIG. 4

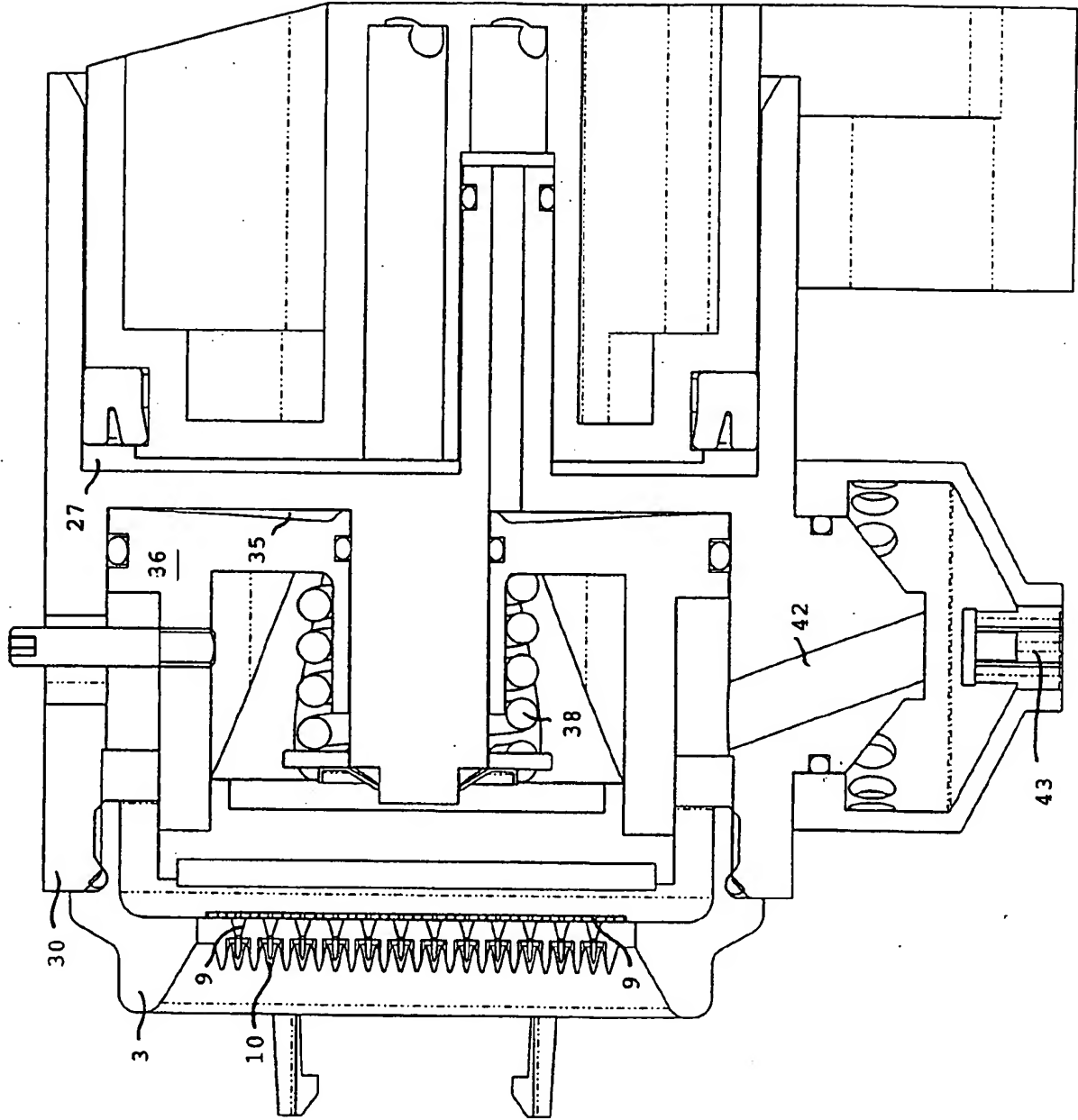


FIG. 5

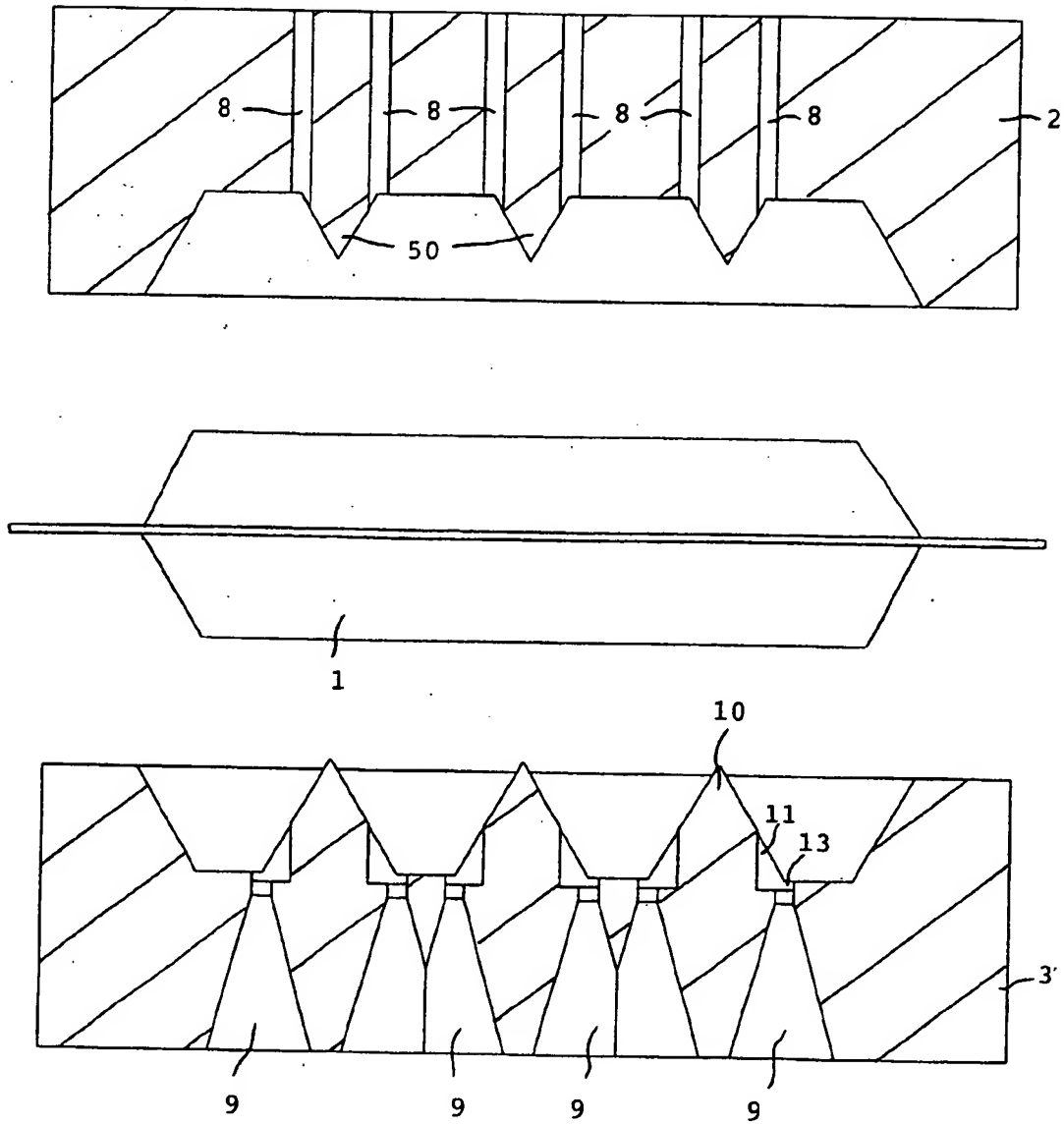


FIG. 6



European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 01 10 7800

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.7)
X	US 5 649 472 A (FOND ET AL) 22 July 1997 (1997-07-22) * column 10, line 66 - column 12, line 19; figures 1-9 *	1-7,13, 14,16,17	A47J31/40 A47J31/06
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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims

Place of search	Date of completion of the search	Examiner
THE HAGUE	19 November 2001	Bodart, P
<p>CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS</p> <p>X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document</p> <p>T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document</p>		

EPC FORM 1503 03.82 (P0-C01)



European Patent
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Application Number

EP 01 10 7800

CLAIMS INCURRING FEES

The present European patent application comprised at the time of filing more than ten claims.

- ☐ Only part of the claims have been paid within the prescribed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for the first ten claims and for those claims for which claims fees have been paid, namely claim(s):
- ☐ No claims fees have been paid within the prescribed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for the first ten claims.

LACK OF UNITY OF INVENTION

The Search Division considers that the present European patent application does not comply with the requirements of unity of invention and relates to several inventions or groups of inventions, namely:

see sheet B

- ☒ All further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for all claims.
- ☐ As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, the Search Division did not invite payment of any additional fee.
- ☐ Only part of the further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for those parts of the European patent application which relate to the inventions in respect of which search fees have been paid, namely claims:
- ☐ None of the further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for those parts of the European patent application which relate to the invention first mentioned in the claims, namely claims:



European Patent
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LACK OF UNITY OF INVENTION
SHEET B

Application Number
EP 01 10 7800

The Search Division considers that the present European patent application does not comply with the requirements of unity of invention and relates to several inventions or groups of inventions, namely:

1. Claims: 1-7 13 16 17

Extraction elements and channels for a coffee machine

2. Claims: 8-12,15,18

Blocking means to control the outflow of coffee

ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.

EP 01 10 7800

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report. The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
The European Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

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